



County of San Diego - Parks and Open Space Program

"Advancing Regional Conservation with Service, Integrity and Science for a Sustainable Future"

SPECIAL CALENDAR ISSUE – Winter 2003

COUNTY HOSTS FIRST WORKING LANDSCAPES FORUM

On Tuesday, November 19, 2002, the County of San Diego's Land Use and Environment Group hosted its first "Conservation and Working Landscapes" Forum. The keynote speaker at the Forum was Doug Wheeler, who is the current Chairman of the Board of the American Farmland Trust and was instrumental in the design and implementation of California's Natural Communities Conservation Planning Program. Other guest speakers and panelists included Merlin Bartz from the United States Department of Agriculture, Jay Chamberlin from the California Legacy Project, Pam Giacomini from the California Farm Bureau, Eric Larson from the San Diego County Farm Bureau, Bill Geyer from the Resource Landowners Coalition, Mike O'Connell from The Nature Conservancy and Robert Copper, Robert Asher, Thomas Oberbauer and Kathleen Thuner from the County of San Diego. The mission of this Forum was "to identify and evaluate promising programs or grants that will provide meaningful incentives to encourage species and habitat conservation on working landscapes." The definition of a working landscape for the purposes of the Forum was a location in which agriculture, forestry and other natural resource-based activities are conducted in ways that are economically viable and conserve habitat for wildlife.

Addressing working landscapes is particularly important to the County as it proceeds with the planning efforts for the North County MSCP Subarea Plan. Working landscapes will play a dominant role in North and East County and can be found on small parcels interspersed with habitat. In light of this, the County would like to coordinate closely with the agricultural community to determine its needs and requirements, as well as the conservation needs of the species and habitats in order to best tailor the North County Subarea Plan to the local community.

To help achieve the goal of adapting the North and East County Plans to address working landscapes and conservation needs, the County invited a group of agricultural and conservation experts, as well as

individuals familiar with various available government grants and programs. During the Forum, participants explored many strategies for meeting both the needs of a working landscape and the needs of a conservation plan. These strategies included conservation and agricultural easements, best management options, tax credits, transfer of development rights, technical assistance programs, pre-approved conservation easement areas, and reduced property taxes.



In the next few months the County will explore and develop the ideas resulting from this Forum. The County will host a follow-up Conservation and Working Landscapes Workshop to discuss the ideas from the Forum with a larger audience. This Workshop will take place in the spring of 2003, and the County hopes that members of the agricultural and conservation communities will take advantage of this opportunity and get involved in productive discussions about agriculture and conservation.

For more information on the Conservation and Working Landscapes Forum or the upcoming public workshop, please feel free to contact Christine Brochard at Christine.Brochard@sdcounty.ca.gov or (858) 694-3004, or visit <http://www.sdcounty.ca.gov/lueg>.



MSCP CELEBRATES WITH POWERFUL NEW WEB PORTAL

The MSCP celebrated its 5th Anniversary on October 24, 2002 at the County Administration Center with hundreds of well-wishers and supporters.

Key to the event was the demonstration of the MSCP Portal, which will be available to the public in the near future at www.mscp-sandiego.org. Taking full advantage of the latest web technologies, the MSCP Portal introduces a One-Stop Shopping approach for information about any facet of the MSCP and allows web visitors to affiliate themselves with a user group if they choose. An extremely powerful search engine called a "web crawler" will not only search MSCP Portal content, but also searches content of MSCP-designated external websites like the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, California Department of Fish and Game and the Environmental Protection Agency.

Bob Copper, the County's Land Use and Environment Group Deputy Chief Administrative Officer, was master of ceremonies for the "Portal to Preservation" celebration introducing Chair Pro Tem Pam Slater,

Supervisor Dianne Jacob, Senator Dede Alpert and Assemblymember Howard Wayne, all of whom praised the MSCP program and the importance of the partnerships formed with the State and Federal agencies. The Supervisors jointly presented a proclamation to Bob Copper, Gary Pryor, Bob Asher and Karen Scarborough (a former City of San Diego employee and key figure when the MSCP was approved by the Board in 1997).



THE WHEELS ARE TURNING AT COUNTY PARKS PRESERVES

County Parks Senior Ranger Maureen Abare and Ranger Ken Marlow promoted patrol opportunities with the County Parks and Recreation Department at the Sycamore Canyon and Goodan Ranch Open Space Preserves at a mountain bike patrol recruitment and training workshop conducted by the City of San Diego this past summer. Nestled between the cities of Poway, Lakeside and Santee, the preserves include ten miles of service roads and trails within a combined 2,025 acres of steep hillsides and broad canyon bottom making them popular destinations for hikers, mountain bikers and equestrians of all levels of ability.

Shortly after the recruitment, the sounds of rolling tires and spinning derailleurs could be heard as volunteers congregated at Goodan Ranch Preserve for an orientation. Through discussion, visual aides and orientation packets, participants were introduced to the history of the preserves and the MSCP in addition to trail networks, boundaries and facilities, hazards, injuries and responses, patrol and radio procedures, rules and regulations, scheduling and uniforms. The

volunteers were rewarded for their participation by a refueling break of refreshments, bagels and cream cheese and the big hit, apple slices with caramel dip!

With the addition of a Volunteer Mountain Bike Patrol, the customer service staff and park patrol at Sycamore Canyon and Goodan Ranch Preserves have shifted into high gear. As the patrol program matures, the County anticipates that patrol functions will extend into the weekdays, complemented by volunteer efforts of the equestrian community. The County is actively developing a volunteer agenda that will provide increased customer service, a fun and rewarding experience for the patrol staff, and also to encourage others to become volunteer members as well.





CITY OF SANTEE PLAN IN PROGRESS

The City of Santee is currently in the process of adopting its own MSCP Plan and hopes to accomplish this by early to mid 2003. Meanwhile, the City has been actively contributing to environmental efforts by coordinating clean-up events and other activities to minimize impact on local watersheds.



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On Saturday, October 5, 2002, the City of Santee coordinated a clean-up effort along the San Diego River. Several volunteers assisted with the clean-up efforts near Mast Park and

in Sycamore Creek. Fifty-two Girl Scouts, representing ten troops from the Lake Canyon Service Unit, attended with their parents. Padre Dam Municipal Water District donated a four-person crew and Waste Management, Inc. assisted with the disposal of the debris. Neighbors along Sycamore Creek turned out to battle arundo, an invasive plant species, in the riverbed, while Santee Roadside Pride volunteers removed trash from the streets near Sycamore Creek preventing future pollution. Volunteers also painted the footbridge and several benches near Wal-Mart in Santee. Santee Mayor Randy Voepel and Rob Hutzel from the San Diego River Park Foundation also assisted with the clean up and praised volunteers for their efforts. By day's end, more than a truckload of debris was pulled out of the river, 20 bags of trash were collected and approximately 25,000 square feet of arundo was cleared.

NORTH COUNTY PLAN MOVING FORWARD WITH SITES

The County has been diligently working with TAIC and AMEC environmental consultants in the preparation of a concept habitat plan map for the North County MSCP. Results of the Habitat Evaluation Model have been presented to the San Diego County Planning Commission. Those results have been incorporated into a SITES reserve selection algorithm that the County is planning to use to identify the pre-approved mitigation areas. The SITES model can mechanically identify the smallest areas of land necessary to meet conservation goals and assists in the identification of potential preserve areas. The somewhat flexible pre-approved mitigation areas that result from the SITES model would become the areas targeted for mitigation, conservation and acquisition. Development may occur within these areas as long as it is designed to minimize impacts from surrounding development. In addition, appropriate blocks of habitat must be maintained to provide necessary connections between blocks of habitat. The pre-approved mitigation area boundaries have been created at a broad scale for adaptable planning purposes. Information gathered during field surveys will be used to refine the delineation of major land core areas and habitat corridors.

County staff has been working with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the California Department of Fish and Game to generate draft alternative SITES model maps for the northern part of the County. These will be presented during public workshops with stakeholders and at a future Planning Commission meeting. The County will be seeking public input in order to prepare a map to be utilized in the draft North County Subarea Plan. At this time, staff is performing field surveys to verify the information on the draft maps.





LOCAL STUDENTS PARTICIPATE IN NATIVE HABITAT RESTORATION

After a long week of classes, homework and exams, students eagerly anticipate the coming weekend so that they can sleep in late and forget about school. But this was not the case for fifteen students from Bonita Vista High School who sacrificed their time in bed for a biology lesson and a few hours of hard work. On December 7, 2002, Ms. Jennifer Reisfield and her students congregated at The Environmental Trust's Chula Vista Wetlands to participate in some native habitat restoration. The students were armed with pick-up sticks, a few rakes and shovels and plenty of trash bags. They began their day by collecting trash, most of which consisted of plastic bottles, aluminum cans, and plenty of tennis balls and basketballs. Then, they learned how to remove exotics, plant native willows and collect and

disperse native seeds. The students also participated in some water monitoring as well as a discussion about the importance of their local ecosystem and maintaining native habitats. Ms. Reisfield hopes to establish an environmental club at Bonita Vista High School, which will use the Earth Force/GREEN curriculum as a guide to developing life-long habits of active citizenship and environmental stewardship.



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